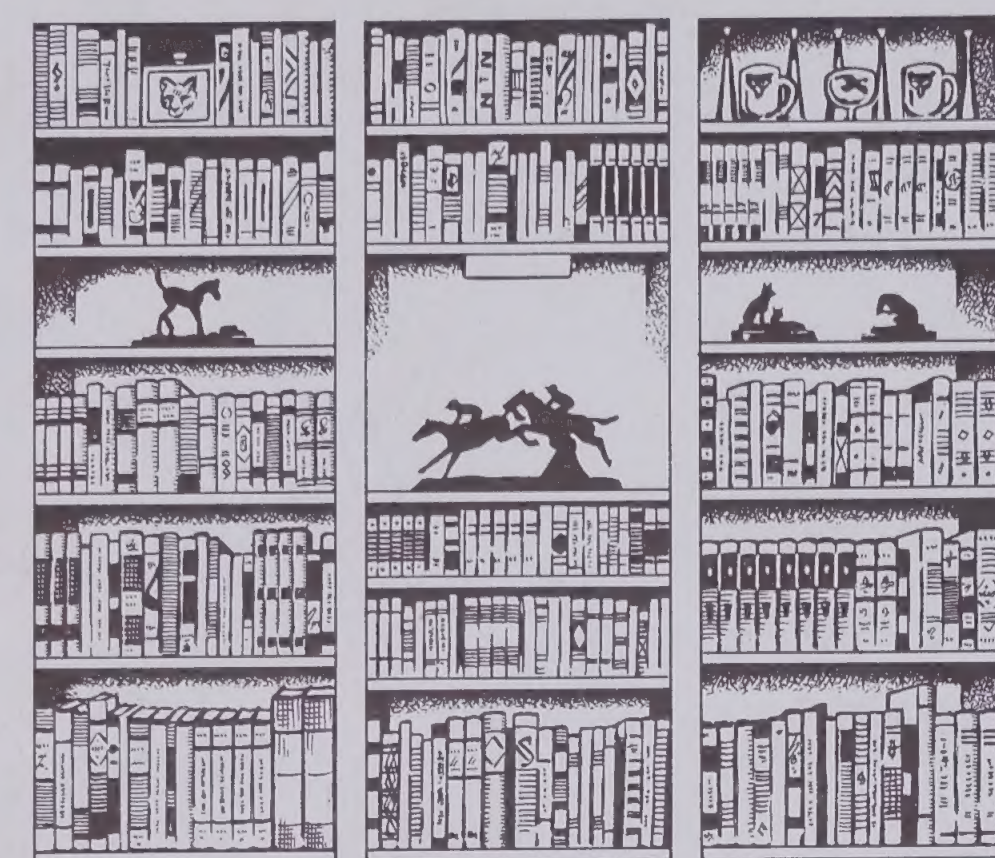


The Passing Seasons

Lincoln Edwards





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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS



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# THE PASSING SEASONS















OVER THE WATER



# The Passing Seasons

Lionel Edwards



London Country Life Ltd.





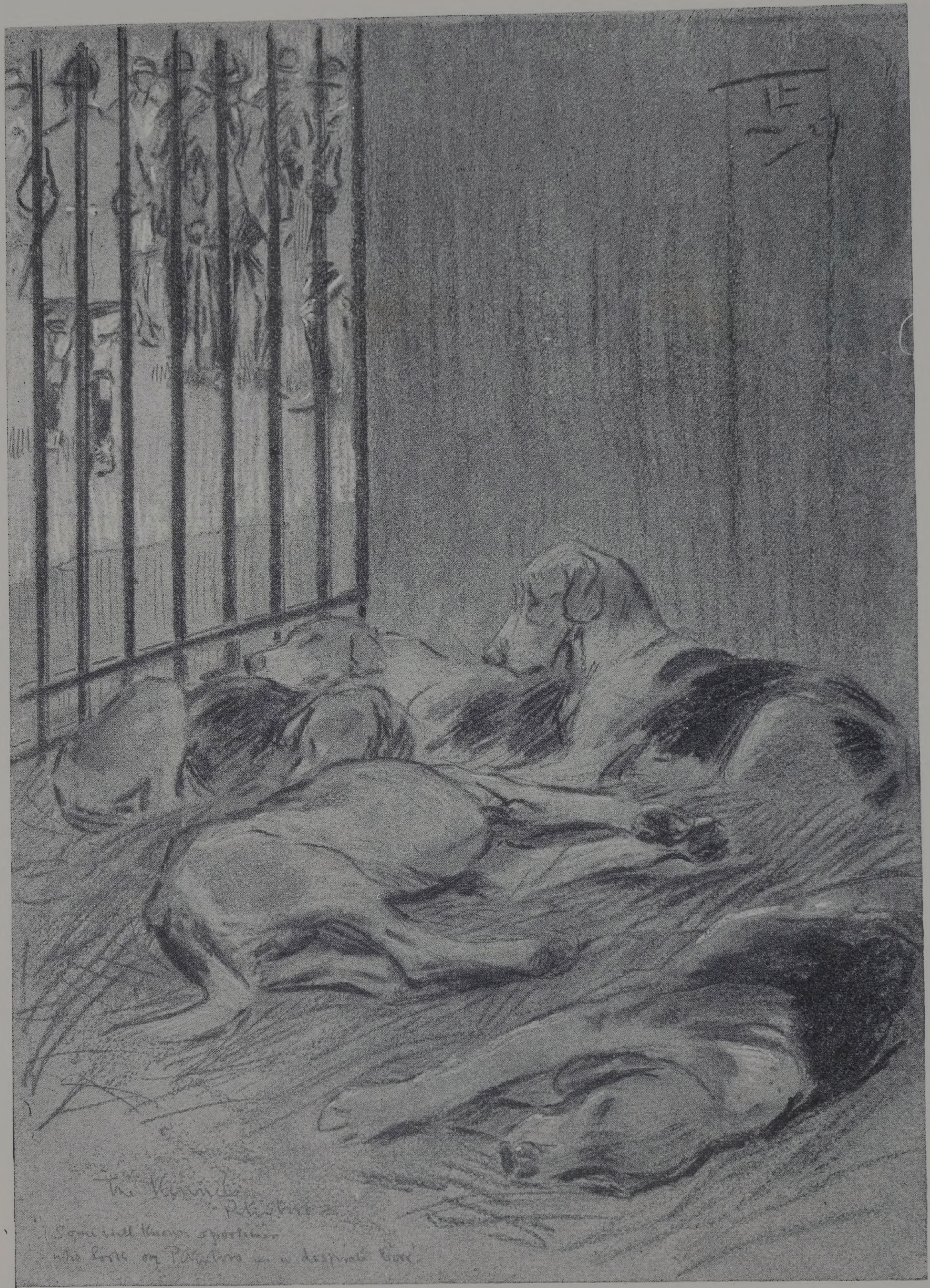
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Dedicated  
To  
The Rising Generation







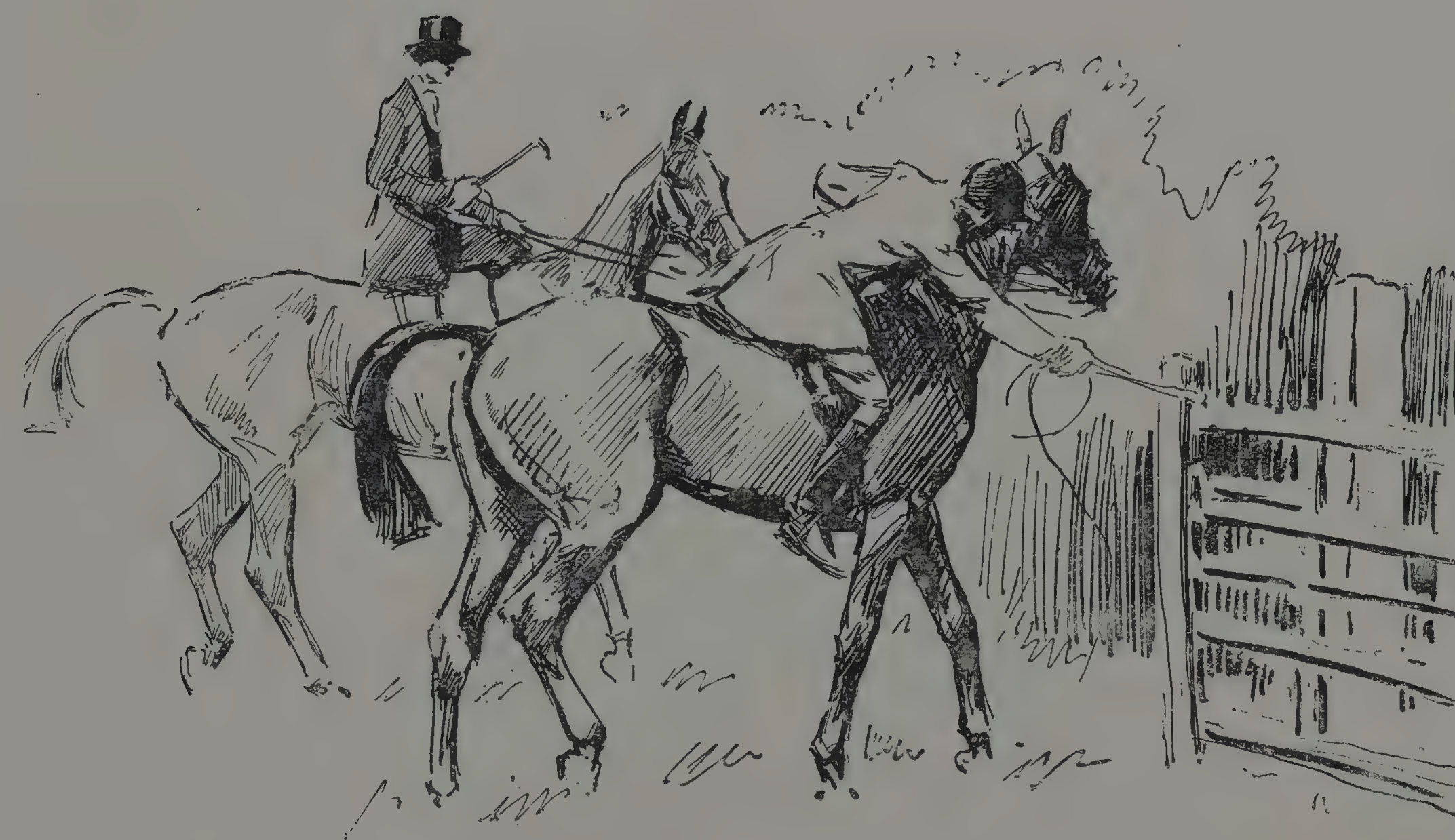
The Kind  
Picture  
Some well known sportsmen  
who look on Poles as a desperate lot.



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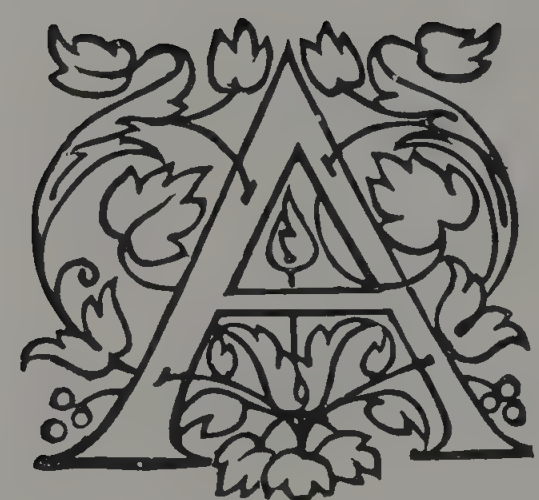








## THE PASSING SEASONS



NYONE can set a trap to catch a sunbeam: the difficulty is, of course, to *catch* the sunbeam. Yet I cannot see that Mr. Lionel Edwards sets any trap whatsoever: the sunbeams seem to come to him in the most natural way imaginable, and just so does he set them in the English landscape—he puts them where we have always known that they belong, so that we are inclined to feel that this is *our* picture of *our* England, not a painted landscape at all. Would you say that only the greater Artists can make us feel things like that?

In a climate such as ours, how important it is to catch those sunbeams, and, if lamentably rare, how rarely beautiful they are when caught. Our Merlin's Isle of Grammarye is surely sunbeam land. In the East there are no sunbeams; there are only clouds turned inside out to show their brazen linings. And the men in the East—those Englishmen whom aeroplanes, wireless, and all the rest of the destroyers of distance can never wholly reconcile to their self-imposed banishment—dear heart, how it will all come back to them—in a jumble of hound-music, sheep bells, and the sound of the wind in the trees—as they look at these sun-flecked pictures. Perhaps it is only a man or woman who has seen the beauty of colour which an Eastern sun calls forth, perhaps only these can fully appreciate the greater beauty of the English sun's more economical methods in painting our English landscape. Sun on the English lawns where the cedar trees set pools of shade; sunshine of the dawn, waking to warmth those mellow, red-brick walls; sunshine at evening touching the hill tops, so that we hold our breath at their beauty—and all the day through—all the long *year* through—the valiant, small sunbeams waiting to escape through the clouds for a moment so that they may show us something they would have us remember.

But in a climate such as ours it would be most unsafe to overpraise a sunbeam, for if our sunbeams now do their work with a struggle they might then become too proud to do any work for us at all. Already their work is so hard, or they so fickle, that Englishmen in England are driven to sport to arm themselves against the days when no sun shines. Without sport, as Mr. Lionel Edwards and all good Englishmen



know, life in England might soon become insupportable. In the East a man may lie in the sun for a lifetime, contemplating the Immensities, and crying (with the shortest of intervals for meals) that the Hand of Allah is heavy upon His servant. In England a man who tried to lie out in the sun would have caught pneumonia long before luncheon time; and men cannot stand out in the rain, like cattle in a pool, and expect to hear a call to prayer even from those church towers of the countryside which have watched the beauty of England grow through many centuries. Sport, therefore, is given to Englishmen—that they may keep well enough to learn the beauty of the land in which they live: and their climate is given to them that they may not win to this knowledge too soon or too easily.

This last is a very important consideration in the breeding of a race of men. Men may grow up in a Lotus Land, conscious of the beauty all around them, but they are apt to grow up rather like a lot of lotuses—a sickly flower, when all is said. The men of the sunbeam country must make something of an effort if they are ever to grow up, and what with learning about sport, and games, and such, their sense of beauty must wait a long time for its turn to develop. Today the best even of our poets and painters are active, short-haired men, and for this reason—that having had to keep their hair cut in order to play those games and take part in sport, they see no reason to let it grow long and messy just because they've woken up to beauty.

Not all of our short-haired Samsons become poets or painters, but they all, I think—all of those who follow sport through the passing seasons—all these awake to the realisation, and usually the *sudden* realisation, of beauty at some time or another. It is true that the majority of our Samsons go to sleep again: their hair being already cut short, nobody has played Delilah-tricks with it while they slept, and the sudden awakening drives them neither to pillar-smashing nor poetry.

But between the Poets and the Painters and Samson-gone-to-sleep-again come some very important people, like you and me. When did you wake up to it all—*where* did you wake up to it all? I don't know that it matters: it was like the pigeons of the French Revolution, or the (probably non-existent) pigs' fat of those Indian Mutiny cartridges—it was merely an occasion, not a cause. But Revelation, quite as much as Revolution, has history behind it: it may be a trifle disappointing to trace our first awakening to beauty to that evening of sunset







seen from the kitchen garden, but unless we had been put to sleep through a dream of beauty which the passing seasons bring, we could never have recognised the beautiful when we awoke to it.

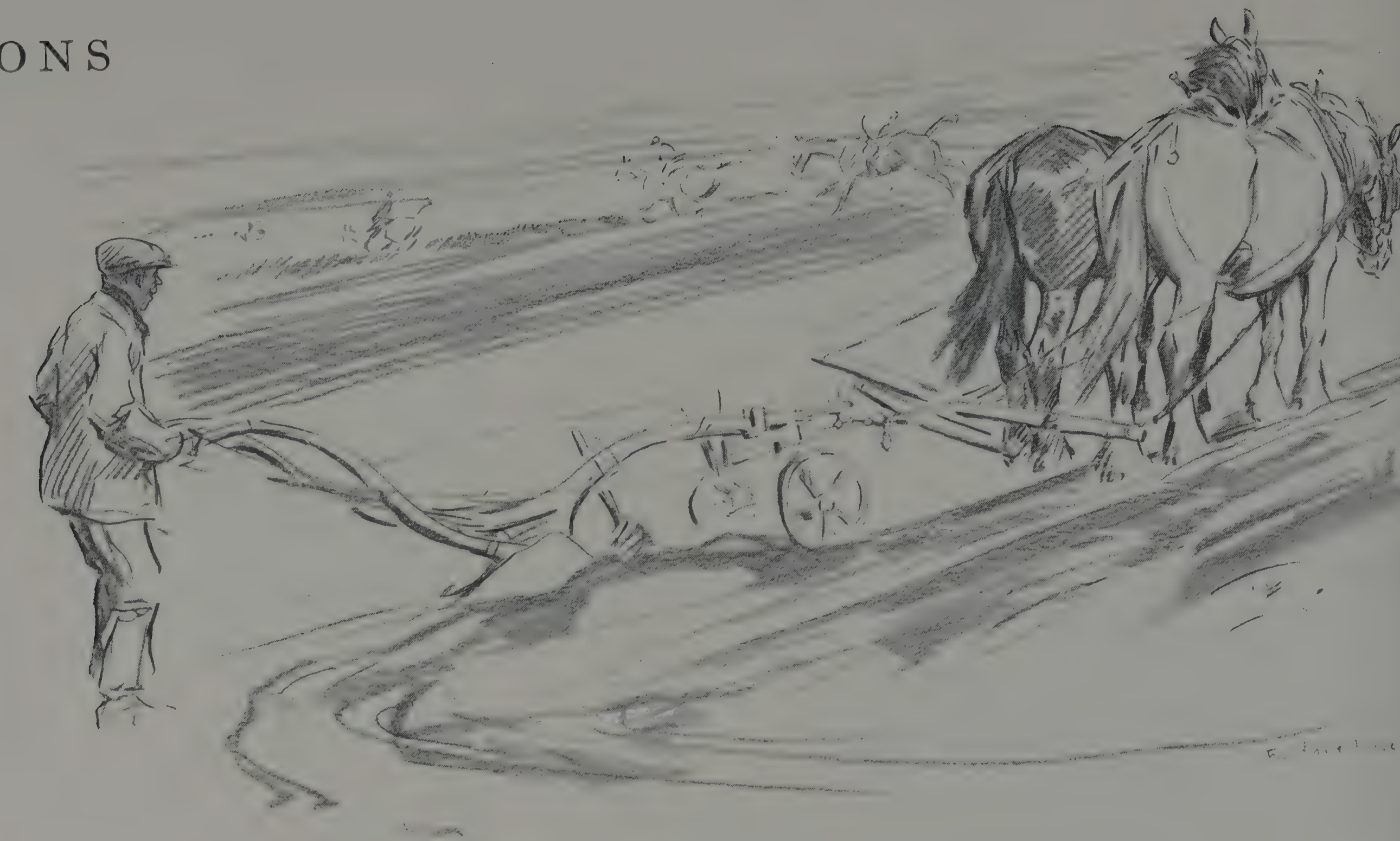
And does the awakening make any difference? It makes all the difference—and none at all. We still cannot lie out in the English sun, but, as through the passing seasons we share the sports of England, we see England itself, clear-eyed.

Sport, also, we see more clearly. We come to believe that the stag is in the Highlands, not so that men may shoot at the stag, but so that men may shoot in the Highlands. Men (and railway fares) being what they are, a short-haired Samson wouldn't bother to go to Scotland merely to look at the scenery: but neither does he go to Scotland just because he wants to shoot a stag. If stag-killing were all he was after, he could do this much in England itself; but this, as we find, he will scarcely bother himself to do even where the stag is a troublesome marauder who may quite legitimately be shot. It is the same with fishing. We may add, in the eyes of Englishmen, to the beauty of a pool by making it an artificial trout pool; but the Englishman doesn't go down to the pools merely to catch fish. If there were any demand for *that* sort of fishing, we should long ago have had hundreds of concrete trout pools constructed in the business heart of London, Liverpool, and Manchester—so that a man might hurry away to catch his fish whenever he couldn't get a game of squash racquets.

In neither fishing nor fox-hunting is the Englishman made aware that the beauty of England is becoming a part of his being. In both these (widely differing) sports the sportsman is too busy with the requirements of his sport to know what is happening to him. In fox-hunting, as also in race-riding, the thrill of England is pumped into his blood as he gets galloping, the wind in his face; in fly-fishing the







injection process is a quieter one, but the Englishman gets, so to speak, his injection when he thinks that all he is getting is the evening rise. Of all the sports, those in which horses have a part give the most opportunities to the greatest number of Englishmen, to wake up to beauty, rubbing their eyes. Yet of all the sports, it is only, I think, in shooting that a man may easily be made aware that the beauty of England awaits his awakening; and because shooting is a noisy business of “hi-yi-yi-ing” beaters, and “Where are yer, on the right?” it is only before the beaters come into view that beauty gets a chance. But in the sport of the driven grouse—in Scotland or in Wales, where desolation is loveliness and the deserts mean peace—*then* it is possible to look upon that which is lovely, and to know the peace of the beautiful. Even so, Englishmen are not allowed to look too long: for it would be mighty awkward for an Englishman if, wandering too far into a land of dreams, he permitted a covey to stream over his butt, unchallenged, unsaluted.

To Englishmen the wide spaces always seem more friendly when they have something of animal life in them. Let there be a first-whip



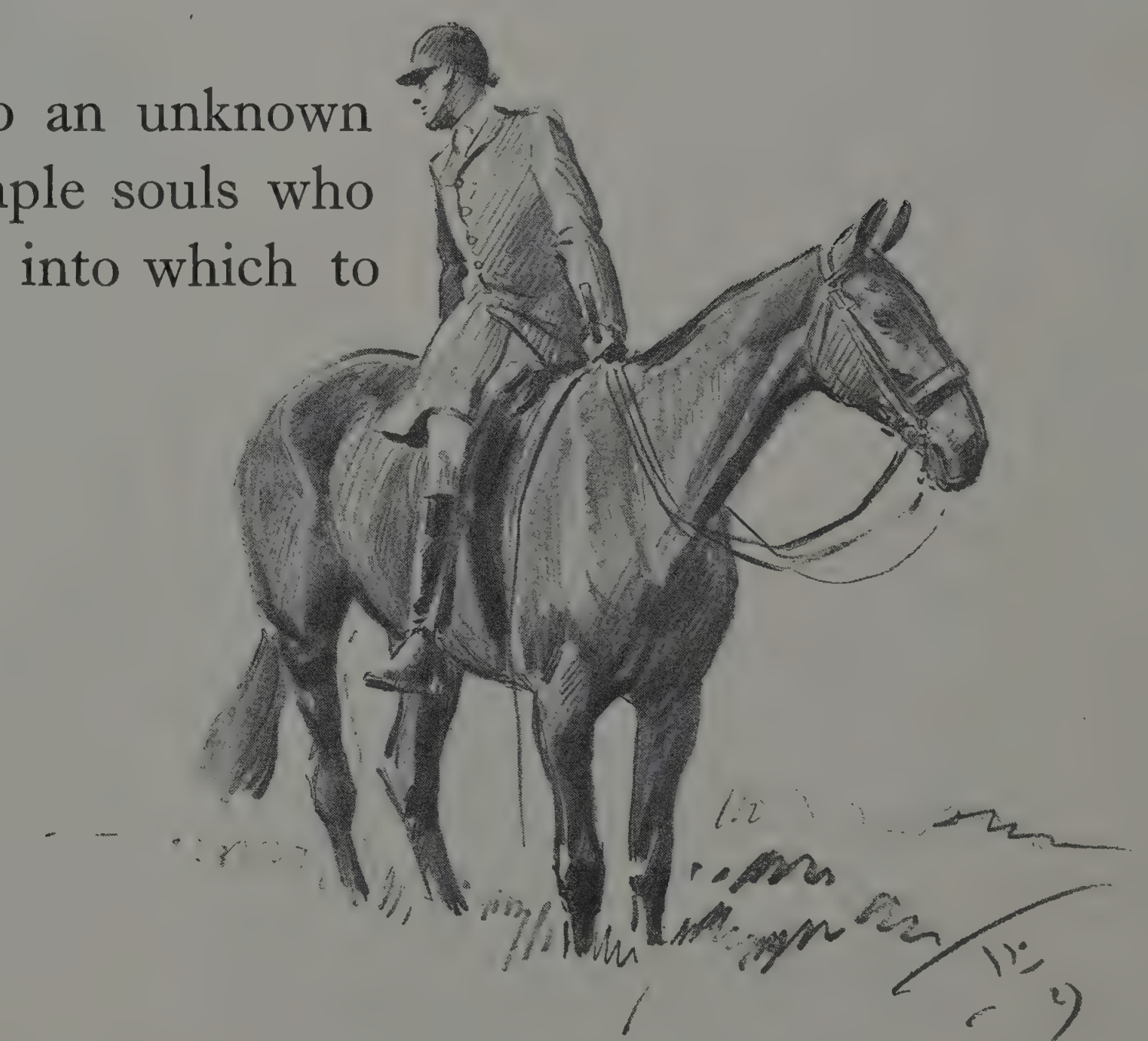




on the sky-line, or, at the least, a sheep or two in the shooting picture to hold a man's attention before the drive begins—then he can feel that there is neither need nor time for flights of fancy and thought-journeys into space.

Yet if a man be careful not to go too far, there is time, when the driving flags are not yet in view, when no life stirs in front of him, and when, as he leans on his grouse-butt, his neighbours are behind his range of sight—yes, then there seems to be just time enough for a journey to a half-known land. It is a journey which may best be made during the last drive of all. Heather purple and mountain blue are beginning to mingle together, a great swirl of mist slowly moves among the hill tops, down towards the moor. All is silence, and in that silence it is as if something were awaiting us . . . if only we—*Bang!* and we are back again. Bang-bang, *Bang!* that last one was *our* bang—the grouse are streaming towards us, low down, dark against the heather. A thud against the front of your butt—*that* was a nice one: so was that . . . and that. Now they are coming high up from the left—your favourite shot, your *favourite* shot: but now only shoulder high—and on the right: streaming past, simply streaming past. And now you can't hit them at all. You—and no grouse—have come down to earth with a bang.

You are gladder than a grouse can be to come down to earth: Englishmen believe that it is not good to wander into an unknown country, having left their guns behind them. Children may make these adventurous journeys into half-known lands—or simple souls who think, like children, that at the worst they can always run back again to safety, and at the best will find some larger hand into which to thrust a small and rather trembly one.







So, I think, it comes about that this Artist, who surely knows the secrets of the English countryside at all seasons of the year, has chosen to show that countryside to us chiefly at those moments when, actively engaged in sport, sitting on a hillside, watching sheep-dog trials—the Englishman is learning the beauty of England without having the slightest idea that he is learning anything of the kind. And so that Mr. Lionel Edwards may not hurt the feelings of those of us who are not English, he has magnanimously—in the English way—pretended that there is not enough beauty in England alone, and has shown us the beauty of Scotland, of Wales, and of Ireland. They tell us that in Ireland it is now only the countryside which does remain beautiful—and that, if the Irish grass were not still the greenest in the world, it would be hard to see the beauty of Ireland through the gloom of the Irish. It is almost, they say, as if the traditional jollity of the Irishman had all this time had no more solid foundation than his traditional grievances. But that I can scarcely believe: I think that if the Irishman is gloomy he must presently awake from that bad dream. And having looked on that nightmare picture, the picture of gloom, may he awake to these pictures—and to the realisation that Nature and Mr. Lionel Edwards have kept them safe for him, all the time.

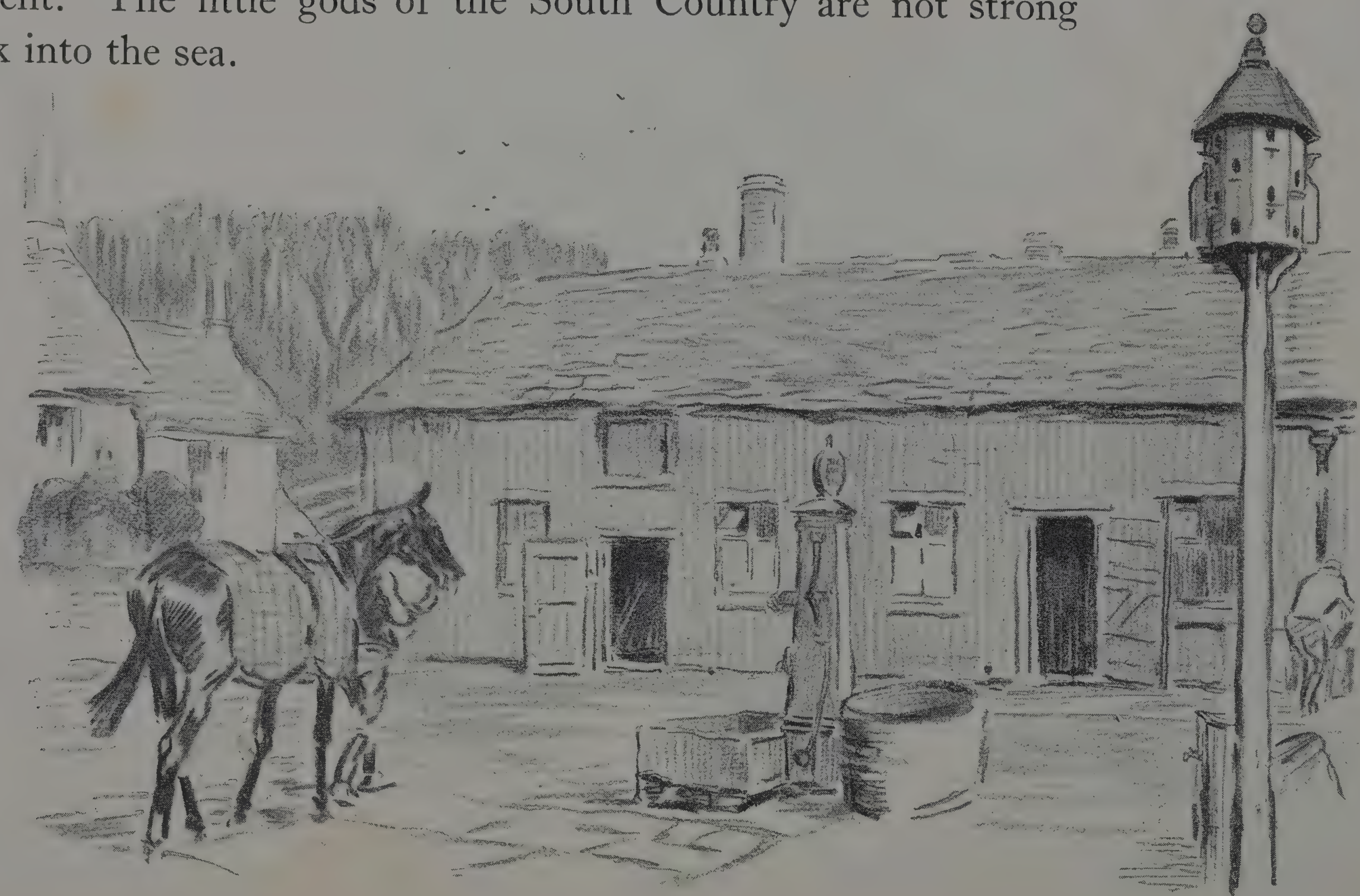
Such artists as this man may always be far to seek, but upon the existence of such men as this artist—men to whom the beauty of England has been revealed—upon them, individually, and in their thousands, we have to rely for the preservation of that beauty. A National Trust may save us from the worst of the landscape-smashing sabotage which would otherwise be wrought by the greed or the folly of men,







but such a Trust can only act where the trust of a nation in its own common sense of the beautiful is in danger of being misplaced. That sometimes happens—and sometimes it is too late or too expensive to do anything to put matters right. Men, with a honking of sirens, come steaming into some Haven of England, and they call it Peace. Flinging ashore, as it were, the baggage of a modern colony, pell-mell, they sprawl, unlovely, among their pots and pans and petrol pumps. In the South the thing has already assumed a serious aspect, threatening to do permanent damage to the picture of England. The men of the Midlands may journey to their coasts, may travel to a sale of blood-stock—a puppy-judging, or the like, and see but little in the country-side which clashes with their own farm-buildings or stable yards and such. But in the South Country there are now whole patches which it will require all the art of time, the restorer, to take out of that picture. Perhaps you are one of those who have hitherto been spared the knowledge that, on the Sussex Downs, there exists an actual “Peacehaven.” Indeed there must, I should suppose, be many Englishmen who have been spared this knowledge: for if to see Rome and die is a thing at which all of us should aim, to see Peacehaven and live can only, I think, be given to men of exceptionally strong constitution. Struggling to avoid pomposity, priggishness, and purse-pride, we may remind ourselves that to weary toilers on the sea of life any port in a storm will seem—and will *be*—a very good port; and that the harbour dues of other ports may be higher than a man can pay. This may be diagnosis, but it fails to suggest a cure. There they lie, a colony tossed so sudden-quick into the blanket of the Downs that it is as if the hands which hold the blanket were paralysed with astonishment. The little gods of the South Country are not strong enough to give the blanket that extra flip which would send the whole boiling back into the sea.





We must not—as I keep on telling you—be pompous. It is nice to adopt an “O God, O Montreal!” attitude, and to cry “O *cripes*, O Peacehaven!”—but how shall it be if these Peacehavens (and there are others) *do* meet what the advertising brotherhood sometimes calls a “felt want”? Why, then those of us who don’t feel to want it can hope that when the thing becomes unbearable we ourselves will be allowed to live, like a lot of Red Indians, in some National (Trust) Reservation.

Mr. Lionel Edwards’ hopes soar higher than that, I think. This Painter of England will agree with the Prime Minister of England in believing that the love of the land is inborn in Englishmen. He, too, will find comfort in the fact that, today, scarcely two generations separate Industrial England from the Agricultural. This last is a fact, but, as a fact, it seems only to weaken the possibility of sharing that other belief. Can it *be* that the love of the land does not die, and that it enters into all Englishmen at birth, if, in so short a time, Englishmen can be found to do *such* things to England?

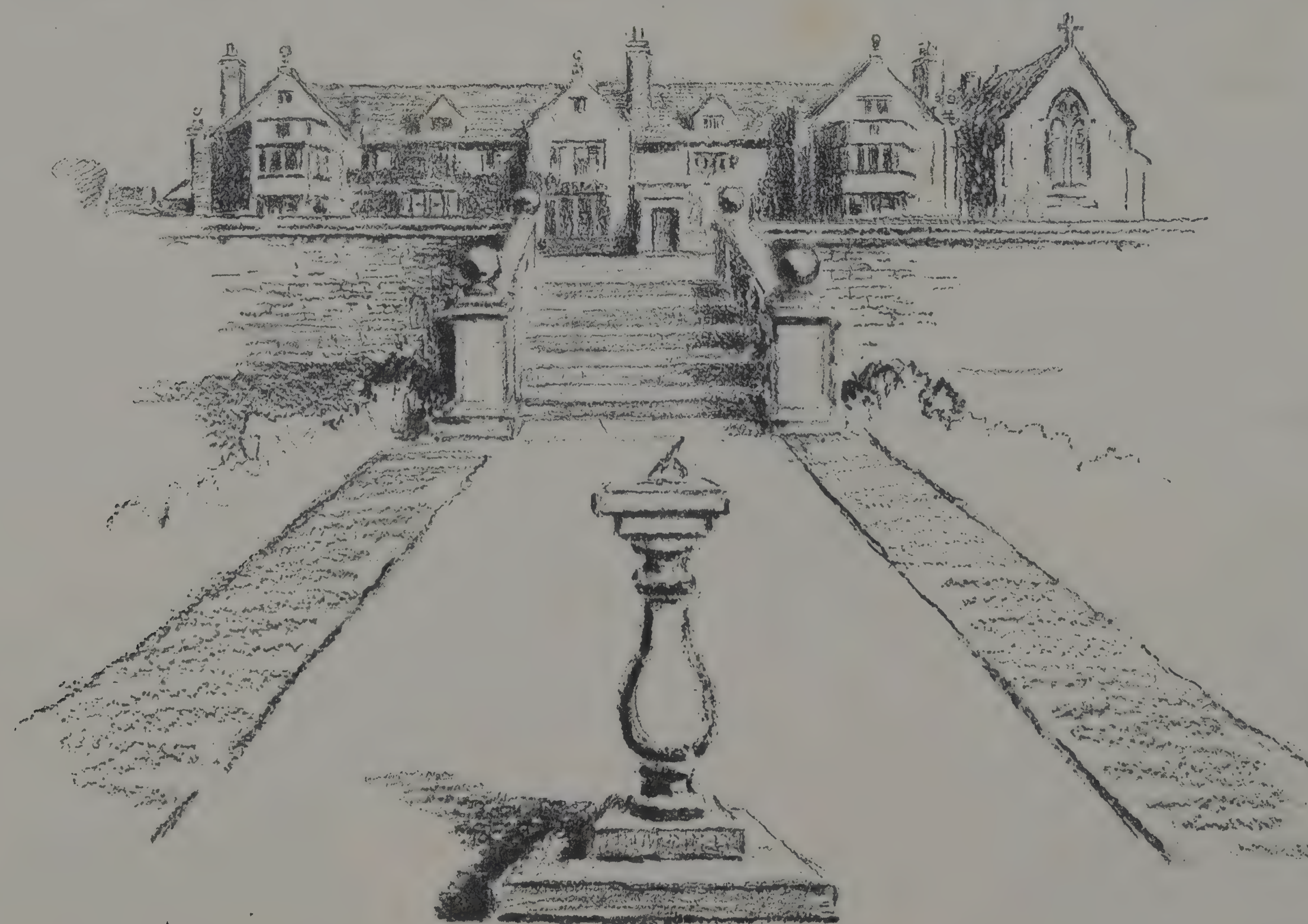
Whatever the answer, the Artist will be the first to agree with us that something more than the seasons is inevitably “Passing.” Looking at these pictures, we are aware that there are some aspects of country life—and many homes in the countryside—which can never be the same again: we begin to think that those garden sundials, which make something of a parade of only counting the cloud-free hours, will soon be permanently on a short-time job. But then, things never *have* been the same from one generation to another. It is from the decay of a season that another harvest comes, and if all flesh is grass and all grass becomes (to put it as nicely as possible) fertiliser, is there not at least a chance that something rare, as well as strange, may come of those petrol pumps and Havens of Peace, later on?

I expect there is a chance. But so far as things beautiful are concerned,

Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye,  
Not uttered by base sale of chapmen’s tongues. . . .  
Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The Poets and the Painters have put the thing before us clearly enough; the Poets have stated the case, the Painters have given the evidence. If we cannot come to a right judgment, cannot hold fast to the beauty of England, the fault will surely be our own. The blame, in any case, will not lie with the artist of this volume; whatsoever things are lovely as the seasons pass in the English countryside, he has shown them to us here.

CRASCREDO.



“Horas non numero nisi serenas”





















































































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